



THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS

ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSION COMMENTS

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Follow, Follow, Follow, Follow Follow the Instructions



Tips from an Anonymous Grader

When Dorothy landed in Oz, she didn't know where to go or what to do next. The Munchkins of Munchkinland told her exactly what to do and how to reach her goal of the Emerald City. We all know that she got distracted a little along the way, but ultimately accomplished what she set out to do, thanks to the Munchkins' clear and simple instructions, "Follow the yellow brick road."

Similarly, when a candidate is handed a test booklet in our test center, they might not know what to do. The analyst who assembled the exam did their best to include straightforward, understandable instructions. They wrote the instructions knowing the answers to the questions on the test, trying to lead the person taking the test to the correct responses.

Before I grade an exam, I read all of the materials given to candidates, including the instructions. When I see the instructions right next to the answer key, I can see a direct relationship between the two. It becomes obvious to me which candidates did not understand or failed to read the instructions, many times resulting in a lower score.

For example, one written exam requires test-takers to write a letter on a given topic. The instructions clearly outline exactly what needs to go into the letter. If a candidate wrote a sentence in their letter for each line of the instructions, they would most likely earn a passing score. Some candidates disregard this outline and write a letter on a different topic; others write about the correct topic but do not address any of the specific concerns given in the directions.

Another exam asks test-takers to create a document. It includes detailed instructions about how it should be formatted and printed. This is part of the assessment; it tells us how detail-oriented a candidate is as well as shows if they can utilize Microsoft Word to change margins, fonts, and print settings.

A common instruction on our exams is to fill in your candidate ID number at the top of each page. By ignoring this basic instruction, we have no way of linking your test materials back to the right person.

Our test center personnel work hard to create fair and appropriate exams. We want people with suitable knowledge, skills and abilities to score the best, so analysts write instructions to help everyone be assessed on an even playing field. Keep this in mind when you come to take a test and thoroughly read the instructions you are given.

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**You are
capable
of more
than you
know.**

*- Glinda
the Good Witch*



Assessments of Steel: IPAC Conference



Recently several members of Commission staff attended the IPAC conference (International Personnel Assessment Council) in Birmingham, Alabama, July 16-19. The theme of the conference was "Assessments of Steel" in honor of the host city. The conference focuses on the field of employment testing in the both the private and public sectors. The 2017 conference hosted five distinguished keynote speakers, pre-conference workshops presented by industry leaders, and a multitude of concurrent sessions. Topics included development and scoring of structured interviews, legal trends and implications, assessment and measurement methodologies, recruitment measures, workforce diversity and perspectives on impact analysis.



Liz Reed of the City of Columbus Civil Service Commission attended the conference and was selected to give a presentation on the methods Commission staff used during a recent exam development and scoring project. The conference provided attendees with opportunities to learn, and share relevant, current and informative assessment-related merit based practices as well as a chance to network, exchange ideas and see how testing is conducted in other cities.

Testing Clinic

The word "test" means different things to different people. For some, it brings memories of chalkboards and addition tables. For others, it means late night cramming sessions and panic. For us here at the Civil Service Commission, we think of a test as a way to find out who has the skills to do the job. We want you to be at your best so that we ultimately hire the best candidate for a job, creating an outstanding workforce for the City.

To help individuals be better prepared on test day, the Testing Clinic was created. This clinic is designed for applicants who want to learn about the application and testing processes for City employment. At the clinic, you will be able to receive help from our staff setting up an online profile and entering employment and education information into your profile. This is an opportunity for you to learn about the Commission's job analysis and test development processes. The Testing Clinic will also be a chance to learn about subtests and even take a sample exam.

This program is designed to provide more information about the testing process but is also intended to help alleviate test anxiety that can prevent you from doing your best. Commission employees have conducted this clinic on-site at City agencies, and it is also offered through Citywide Training at the Department of Human Resources. Please check the Human Resources' training schedule for upcoming dates.



The Request for Review Form

The Request for Review Form is our most commonly used form. Submitting this form to our office means you are requesting the Executive Director to review the status of your situation. This could include any failure during the testing process, any disapproval of an application, or any other action taken by the Civil Service staff.

The Request for Review form only requires the most basic information. We need your name, candidate ID, address, and phone number to locate your information quickly and have contact information readily available. The main portion of the form is the section titled, "Reason for Request and/or Remarks," where you can write what you deem appropriate to explain your situation and the reason(s) you believe a different outcome should occur.

Once you submit the Request for Review form to our office, you can expect a response to be mailed to you (via U.S. mail) in approximately ten days. A complex issue may require more time to fully investigate. Please note that a Request for Review must be filed within ten calendar days of the notification of failure, rejection, or other staff action. You may still submit the form if it has been longer than ten calendar days from the action, but your request may be rejected based on timeliness alone.



Some tips: **1) Take your time.** It may be that you are addressing an issue that you feel strongly about. If you hastily write something "just to get the form in," you may leave out vital facts that could be key to the outcome you desire.

2) Stick to the facts. Generally, you were denied an action based on a state/Federal law, a Civil Service Rule, lack of experience or education, or because you missed the application deadline for an exam. Look up the appropriate law or Rule and tell us why it does or does not apply to you. Leave out any narrative that does not directly support your claim.

3) Write as clearly and concisely as possible. More pages do not mean you are more convincing; they mean it is harder to find the relevant information buried in the extra pages.

4) Make use of the "additional information attached" block. We recommend you include any documentation to support what you are saying. For example, if you had issues with the computer/website, use the "print screen" function and show us the problem so we can see exactly what went wrong. Or, if you were late for an exam due to a medical issue, attach a note from your doctor so that documentation is provided.

I Passed the Test! ...ummm...Now What?

After the Exam: Entry Level Police Officer and Firefighter Exams

You got an email letting you know you passed the Police Officer or Firefighter exam. Congratulations! So what happens next?

Eligible candidates with the highest scores will be contacted first to start the background process. The background investigation includes completion of a detailed background questionnaire called the Personal History Questionnaire (PHQ), a polygraph examination, checks of criminal and traffic records, employment verification, an oral board panel interview and a final interview. You are encouraged to be honest on your PHQ and throughout the process because your responses at different steps will be compared.

The PHQ will be sent by email to the top score band shortly after the notification of test results. So, if you change your email address, phone number or mailing

address, remember to change it in your profile online at columbus.gov/civilservice. In the meantime, remember to check your email often since that is how background investigators will initially contact you.

After the background process, the Safety Director will review applicants' files and make the final determination on conditional offers of employment. Individuals with conditional offers will be scheduled for medical and stress tests, and psychological screening. You will also be required to complete a supplemental questionnaire and additional polygraph examination regarding drug use. Passing all steps will result in a final offer of employment and starting date for the Police or Fire Academy.

Although this is a long and competitive process, we hope that you will stick with it because a career as a Columbus Firefighter or Police Officer is extremely rewarding!



??? Ask Eyestein ???

Dear Eyestein:

I applied for a job earlier this month and just got an email saying I was rejected for "NQ-Lack of Required Education or Experience." However, my last job looks just like everything listed in the "Examples of Work" section on the job posting. What did I do wrong? I'd be perfect for this position!

Signed, Hard Workin' Man

Dear Brooks & Dunn Fan:

When we review applications, we are comparing the job duties you provided in the "work experience" section to the required minimum qualifications, not to the examples of work. The process we use to determine the minimum qualifications is based upon input from incumbents, their supervisors, human resources staff, unions, and industry standards. These qualifications are reviewed at least every five years to ensure they are up-to-date and necessary.

The job for which you applied required you to have two years of experience in a specific field. The work you listed on your application was in a different field. So, while some of the examples of work definitely matched up, such as "supervising employees" and "tracking the maintenance on equipment," you ultimately did not meet the minimum qualifications for that job.

Dear Eyestein:

I put in an application this week and got a strange email from you guys. The title said "Minimum Qualifications Rejection" but then said I had five days to email you more information about one of the jobs I had on the application. I did, and now I'm scheduled to take the test in a couple weeks.



I still don't understand why I had to give extra details. What was that about?

Signed, Clear as Mud

Dear Clearing Things Up:

You received a "clarification." We place a lot of importance on the minimum qualifications listed on a job posting/recruitment (see the previous question).

It might help to think of a clarification as part of a conversation:

First, we put up a job posting on our website saying, "Please come apply for this really great job. Here is the experience (or education) you need to have."

Then, when you fill out your application, you are saying, "I have that experience! I'd like that really great job. Here is my experience."

The analyst reviewing your application responds with "Sorry, that's not the experience we were looking for" or "Wonderful experience! Please move on to our next step."

However, in your case, the analyst was having difficulty determining if your experience met the required minimum qualifications. The duties you described at your last position were very vague, but the reviewer thought that you might qualify based on the job title. The reviewer instead, asked you for more information so they could make that determination. They said, "Please tell me more so I can make an informed decision."

This clarification only happens in rare cases, so we recommend you update your profile to include clear and specific duties at each job listed. We are glad you responded within the five days so you could be approved!

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

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Photo credit: Belinda Anderson



Meet the Staff: Tearicka Cradle

If you stop by to see Commission employee Tearicka Cradle in the month of August, chances are her office will be filled with backpacks and school supplies. That's because the Restoration Academy Coordinator is busy collecting supplies for the Annual Book Bag Drive. Tearicka manages the Academy which is a four to six month program to assist restored citizens with felony convictions in returning to the workforce. The Book Bag Drive is one way Restoration Academy participants give back to the community. Backpacks with school supplies are donated to children of incarcerated individuals and distributed to needy children in the community through Alvis, Inc. and the Columbus Urban League. The Academy sets up internships with the City and other area employers, and provides training in many areas, including work readiness skills. What Tearicka likes best about her job is working with the individuals who go through the program. She loves to see the smiles of appreciation on their faces when they obtain permanent employment.

Tearicka began her employment with the Civil Service Commission in 2013 and has spent her career as a customer service professional. She was born and raised in Columbus and graduated from Linden McKinley. She obtained her undergraduate degree from Ohio Dominican University, has a master's degree in Education from the University of Phoenix, and is working toward her Ph.D. at Capella University.

When she has time, Tearicka loves to read, crochet, and watch DIY. She has two children, a son and a daughter, and she is excited for the birth of her first grandchild, a baby boy born in August.



WHERE IS IT?

LAST QUARTER'S ANSWER:

Decorative panels on the new Michael B. Coleman Governmental Center
Each panel represents a section that will work inside the building.

Last Quarter's First Five:

Diane Berinato, *Department of Finance*
Brittany Convers *Division of Infrastructure Management*
Mike Schwab, *Code Enforcement*
Jeff Mitton, *Public Service*
Mamadou Barry, *Department of Building and Zoning Services*

The folks at Police received last quarter's issue late, so here are Police's First Three:

Teresa Bowling, *Research & Development Unit*
Kelly Harrier, *Grants Unit*
Deborah Payne, *Seizure Unit*

Staff Notes

Over the last six months, the Civil Service Staff has welcomed and bid farewell to several employees. We appreciate past contributions and will miss departing members of our "work family." Simultaneously, we look forward to a bright future full of new faces and ideas.

Wendy Brinnon,
Executive
Secretary II

Beth Dyke,
Office Assistant I

Jeremy Dulaney,
Personnel
Analyst I

Angela Bennett,
Executive
Secretary I

Annette Bigham,
Executive
Secretary II

Belinda Anderson, Office
Assistant III

Tessia Smith
Personnel
Analyst I

Alex Harrison,
Office Assistant II

